

# Collector Editions

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*Acquiring Rugs In An Uncertain Market, p.25*

# Collector Editions

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This silk wool Kashan prayer rug, measuring 6½' by 4½', sold at Sotheby Parke Bernet's December 15, 1979, auction of Persian rugs and carpets for \$28,000, against a pre-sale estimate of \$30-40,000. Most of the lots in this auction sold at or below estimate, underscoring the uncertainties in today's oriental rug market.

*Cover photograph courtesy of Sotheby Parke Bernet.*

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# Studio Glass: The Next Decade

Seven comments on the growing glass movement and the need to distinguish art from craft

by Paul Hollister

**W**hat are the prospects for Studio Glass in the 1980's? What will it look like? I asked Harvey Littleton who co-founded the Studio Glass movement way back in 1962, and I asked several well-known dealers in glass. Their answers reflect a consensus that Studio Glass is here to stay, at least for the next decade. No one expects any art movement to last more than a generation.

## ERIC SINIZER, *Light Opera, San Francisco*—

*I was the first big art glass dealer in the country; I've been showing Studio Glass since 1971. I'm optimistic. I think the market will eventually recognize and support art. A class of real glass artists is now emerging whose production is necessarily limited and whose work is of high quality. In the process that separates artists from craftsmen a lot of glassmakers will fall by the wayside. Thirty to fifty percent of the studios will have disappeared, and those that remain will be isolated down to their specialties. Too much iridescent-surfaced glass has been produced by glassmakers who aren't really putting their hearts into it, and sold by people who thought they knew what was good for the customer. Too bad, for some real, genuinely conceived "Art Nouveau" style glass was and is still being made. But I see the market swinging dramatically to colored crystal.*

## MARILYN SCHAHET, *Lucid Moments, Chicago*—

*We handle some of the best. Studio Glass is on the upswing as house gifts and collectibles. But we have to make a distinction between decorative art and art which can be used for decoration. I make that distinction in the gallery—production items are kept in back and separate from one of a kind sculpture. I'm for limited editions provided the colors and patterns vary from piece to piece. But right now there's too much glass in gift shops and crafts galleries. I'm putting the good glass into antiques shows where it can be seen by collectors.*

*The future? I think we are seeing just the tip of the Studio Glass iceberg. The movement must grow if it is not to become stuck in a rut. I have faith in glass artists who are concerned with quality and who are willing to struggle to support themselves. In the next two or three years we are going to see glassmaking become an art form.*

## LINDA NORTON, *The Gazebo, Gatlinburg, Tennessee*—

*We do carry glass for the general public as an introduction to glass, and we advise our customers to buy what they like and not just to collect. However, we display and encourage people to buy what we consider art. Studio Glassmaking is a back to roots movement, and as such, is a craft. But within the movement there are a dozen to fifteen glassmakers who are true artists. We are deeply committed to those artists we have faith in, artists who have, incidentally, gained museum acceptance. We believe that glass has become a true art form. The next decade will see less "Art Nouveau" style glass and more cased pieces, and more glass sculpture.*

## HARVEY LITTLETON, *Spruce Pine, N.C.*—

*The next decade will be an extension, a deepening of what we see today. America is going to develop its own colored glass and it will be much better than what we now import from Europe. To make a bad pun, we haven't even scratched the surface—there's going to be more and better glass engraving and cutting. Industry and the bright, college-educated and trained glassmakers will work together, a situation that has never obtained before, with rare exceptions such as Galle and Tiffany. The free exchange of information has come into the arts, and the real artists are going to push beyond eclecticism.*

*The glass shown here represents some of the most artistically advanced work being done in the United States.*

*Non-functional baskets by Dale Chihuly.*

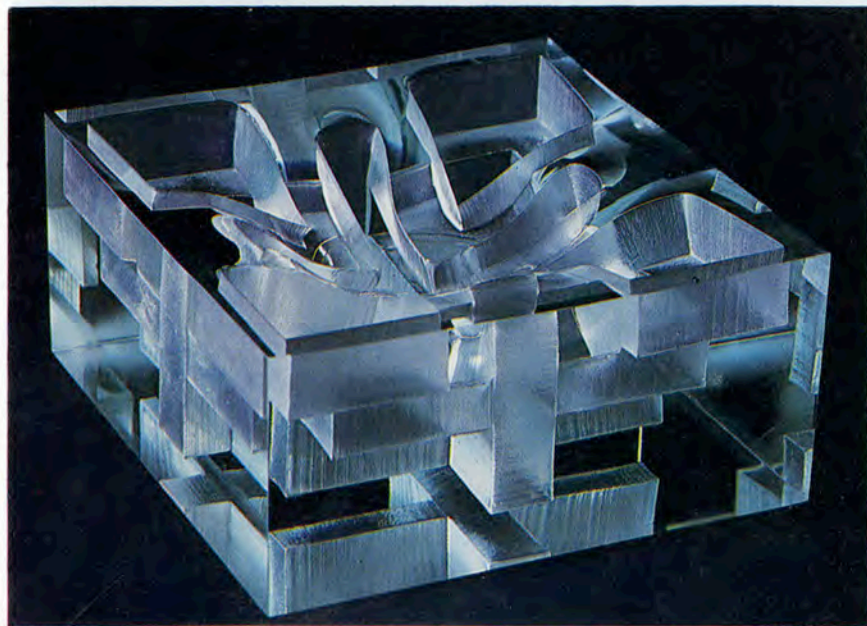


Courtesy of Contemporary Art Glass

**TOM BOONE AND  
FERDINAND HAMP—  
SON, *Habitat*, Dearborn,  
Mich.—**

**R**ight now America still doesn't know there's a glass movement on—the exposure has just begun and all horizons of glassmaking are expanding. Studio glassmakers are a friendly, cohesive body of people working together and sharing knowledge. As a result, glass is now at a very high level of quality that could signal a whole new period in glassmaking. At the same time the studio movement is being split between salable crafts and changing art. Costs of setting up a studio are rising and studio people are beginning to band together to share the furnace. As a result, too many people are producing the same kind of glass. Galleries are going to have to determine what is art and what is commercial production. It will come down to salable crafts versus changing art. As for the glass artists, we don't think they'll let us down. We still have a long open road ahead.

Courtesy of Contemporary Art Glass



John Littleton

Top: Untitled geometric crystal construction by Steven Weinberg, 1979. Above: One of Harvey Littleton's smaller optical glass abstractions.

**JOANNE LEVI,  
*Kruckemeyer and Cohn*,  
Evansville, Indiana—**

**I**f the glass market is properly handled, we are now on the threshold of a Golden Age. By properly handled, I mean that dealers must be very selective, they must pick high quality glass from artists who are truly innovative, rather than merely experimental—which usually means not successful. Good university art courses and glassmaking facilities have enabled glassmakers to break through in innovative ways. On the other hand, independent glassmakers starting out have to be commercial first. And the danger here is that they will become content with commercial success. Dealers who carry both art and gift glass must make clear the distinction between the two in the way they show the glass.

Last summer thousands came from nine states to our first Mid-America Glass Festival, and we expect next August to be even better. Collectors who used to collect old glass are now collecting Art Glass.



Photo by Richardson Printing Corp./Courtesy of Habitat

Above: A vase from Joel Philips Myers' *Contiguous Fragment Series*.

**DOUGLASS HELLER,  
*Contemporary Art Glass*  
Gallery, New York City—**

**G**lass has become trendy. Awareness that glass is "in" has developed a false and temporary market for people who know little about glass but will buy anything, to "put it in my closet for twenty years." When that market disappears, two groups will be left. One group is the commercial glassmakers who develop viable product lines—their glass is already overflowing the craft fair market. The other group will comprise the very gifted artists, whose glass is being transformed into sculpture.

Right now Studio Glass is still a cottage industry—I have to go from studio to studio to get the good glass I need. Our success is making it difficult to get enough good glass to pay the rent. Glass artists have their problems too: rising fuel and equipment costs are driving individuals to combine, studios are becoming studio factories. One studio glassmaker now calls himself a glass manufacturer. Glass artists must have government and industrial grants to support the glass sculpture they are so miraculously producing.

One problem for most of those interviewed was to coin a term that would distinguish between glass that is art and glass that is craft. For some the terms Art Glass and Studio Glass don't seem to be helpful, and they use instead the term sculpture. While a new term might be handy, it is ultimately the glass itself that reveals which it is, art or craft. To perceive the difference requires something from the viewer.